

## Frequently Asked Questions about Career Clusters

Updated 10/13/05

### **1. What are Career Clusters?**

Career Clusters are groupings of occupations, entry level through management, sharing common business functions and activities and requiring similar core knowledge and skills.

### **2. How did the cluster model get started?**

A variety of entities and agencies have been working on the concept of career clusters for a number of years. About 6 years ago the U.S. Department of Education began working on clusters providing funding for the development of five clusters. That funding was cut off before the other 11 clusters were completed. Since that time a consortium of the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education has supported the work of developing those 5 clusters plus 11 more. The work has become an ongoing grassroots effort with close collaboration of business and education.

### **3. Why is Idaho even talking about Career Clusters?**

Career Clusters provide structure to many different facets of the work that schools are doing to increase student achievement and better prepare students for transition from high school to college and the workplace. The cluster model identifies knowledge and skills that are needed in the workplace. These knowledge and skills can be tied to standards and curriculum to better prepare students. By providing the links between school and the workplace, students understand the relevancy of what they are learning. Career exploration within the cluster structure allows students to match their interests, skills and education requirements with possible careers.

### **4. How are Career Clusters structured?**

The clusters are divided and organized into pathways and career specialties. Important knowledge and skills are identified for each cluster. Performance and measurement criteria are defined for each of the knowledge and skill statements.

Career Cluster  
Pathways  
Specialties

### **5. What are Knowledge and Skills Statements?**

Each of the 16 Clusters has a foundation of knowledge and skills statements (K&S) that represent what people need to know and be able to do in the careers represented in that cluster. These knowledge and skills statements have been organized into 10 topic areas.

1) Academic Foundations

2) Safety, Health & Environment

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 3) Communications                      | 4) Leadership & Teamwork              |
| 5) Problem Solving & Critical thinking | 6) Ethics & Legal Responsibility      |
| 7) Information Technology Applications | 8) Employability & Career Development |
| 9) Systems                             | 10) Technical Skills                  |

Each knowledge and skill statement has performance elements and measurement criteria.

K&S Statements – broad statements specifying the knowledge and/or skills required to demonstrate competency in the cluster or pathway

Performance Elements – specific measurable statements that indicate what the learner must know and be able to do to meet the intent of the K&S statements

Measurement Criteria - items that clarify what is to be Measured and the level of performance expected.

## **6. How are Career Clusters organized in Idaho?**

Idaho has taken the 16 National Career Clusters and organized them under 6 Super Clusters.

### **Idaho's Super Cluster Model**

Super Cluster

Career Cluster – groupings of related occupations

Pathways – groupings of career specialties that share knowledge and skills

Specialties – the full range of career opportunities in each pathway, entry level through management including technical and professional

## **7. How are the Super Clusters different from Idaho's 6 Career Pathways?**

The Super Cluster model builds upon the existing Career Pathways adopted about 10 years ago by the state. The Super Clusters are similar to Idaho's 6 Career Pathways but are more detailed and more clearly define career groupings by identifying the Career Cluster.

### **Idaho's Career Pathway model**

Pathway

Major

### **Idaho's New Super Cluster Model**

Super Cluster

Career Cluster

Pathways

Specialties

## **8. What are Idaho's Super Clusters?**

- Agriculture and Natural Resources
- Arts and Communications
- Business and Management
- Engineering and Industrial Systems
- Health Care
- Human Resources

## **9. How are the 16 Career Clusters aligned under the 6 Super Clusters?**

Agriculture and Natural Resources

- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources

Arts and Communications

- Arts, A/V Technology & Communications

Business and Management

- Business, Management & Administration
- Finance
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Marketing, Sales & Service

Engineering and Industrial Systems

- Architecture & Construction
- Information Technology
- Manufacturing
- Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

Health Care

- Health Science

Human Resources

- Education & Training
- Government & Public Administration
- Human Services
- Law, Public Safety & Security

## **10. Who will use Career Clusters?**

Parents, students, teachers, business and their employees can use the clusters.

## **11. How might education use the clusters?**

Career exploration – Students can explore a variety of careers that share skill sets and interests

PTE program development – A sequence of courses can be developed that meet skill sets as defined by business

Connections and transitions from high school to college – Classes can be sequenced and dual credit obtained

Relevant learning – Tie learning in the classroom to skills needed for the workplace

Increase math skills and communication skills – Skill levels necessary for the workplace can be met in the classroom by increasing the rigor in these classes

**12. How might business use the clusters?**

Skill set identification - Identify knowledge and skills needed by their workers

Assess skill levels - Identify gaps in knowledge and skills between what workers need to perform their jobs and the skills they actually have

Identify training needs - Based on skill assessments, employers can talk with training providers to help with employee training

**13. How might parents and students use the clusters?**

Career exploration – Students, parents and counselors can discuss a variety of career options based on student interest and the skills identified for each cluster

Planning for high school and college classes – Students, parents and counselors can plan courses of study for the student based on interests and abilities

**14. Where can I find more information?**

There is a national career cluster website, [www.careerclusters.org](http://www.careerclusters.org). Because there is so much interest and work being done nationally, a search using key words “career clusters” will produce many hits for further information. The Professional Technical Education website, [www.pte.idaho.gov](http://www.pte.idaho.gov), will continue to be updated as more information about the project in Idaho becomes available.